

# Eventful History of "Times" Retold

How Little Journal of Early Days Became  
Great Metropolitan Newspaper;  
Bright Future Forecast

BY HARRY CARR

The very first home of The Times I never saw. It was in the old Downey Block, a brick building that stood at Temple and Spring streets where the Federal Building is now. It was an historic neighborhood. Just across the street was the St. Charles Hotel, the tony hangout of the first gringos. In front of the St. Charles the young caballeros used to graze the dirt street and contest to see which could rein up his halibone horse and make it slide farthest on its haunches.

The Times was started in the eighties, soon after Los Angeles had a railroad, by three job printers who published a little sheet called the Mirror as a house organ to advertise their printing shop. It was about the size of a sheet of foolscap.

One day two men came into the print shop and said they wanted to start a daily newspaper. Nathan Cole was the son of the Mayor of St. Louis. The other was a Scotchman. . . . Thomas Gardiner. The Times' new building at First and Spring is a magnificent structure. That is admitted; but it is far from the most elegant thing in the history of the newspaper. It pales beside the memories of Gardiner. He went around the little adobe town—completely over-awing its 12,000 inhabitants—collecting ads from the town undertaker and collecting news items—dressed in a top hat, a Prince Albert coat and the first spats ever seen in the pueblo.

Evidently, however the spats were not impressive enough; the new publishers soon went on the rocks and the disgraced printers found themselves with a daily newspaper on their hands.

## COURAGE AND \$1000

Into this situation came Col. M. G. Otis who had courage, journalistic genius and \$1000 cash. Col. Otis (he did not become a general until the Spanish-American War) was a man of remarkable personality and experience. He had been an Ohio farm boy, a soldier of distinguished record, a foreman of the government printing office in Washington, governor of the sealing islands off Alaska. Just prior to coming to Los Angeles, he had been editor of a successful newspaper in the then sleepy little pueblo of Santa Barbara.

He bought an interest in the little Los Angeles daily for \$5000, paying \$1000 down and giving his note. From a little cubby hole in the Downey Block he edited the paper. Loaded with debt, he drew a salary at which a cub reporter would snuff in these days. He gathered the news and edit. She wrote the first column in Los Angeles—"The Saunterer." Their daughters helped in the tiny business office. The paper was printed on a little jerk-water press of literally jerk water. It ran on water power from the city sanka. There were terrible moments when the water pipes got clogged up by fish and they had to stop the press run.

## STOOD BY GUNS

Owing to the fearless outspoken editorial policy, the little newspaper was in hot water most of the time. Poverty often starved him in the face; and ruin threatened; but the Colonel stood by his guns and never backed down.

This history of The Times is unique in this: that it is one of the rare instances where those who stamped and stamped with it during the lean years have lived to see it become a great property and one of the most powerful journals in the world. Their experienced hands are still at the wheel.

In 1883, it expanded into an eight-page paper with a two-revolution Campbell flat-bed press of which they were enormously proud. It would take about two months' working day and night to print an issue of the present-day Sunday Times on it.

While they were still in the funny old brick building, The Times issued its first "Annual Trade Number"—which has been printed annually ever since as the Midwinter Edition and which has had so great a part in the upbuilding of Southern California.

## FIRST NEW HOME

By 1887, the paper had prospered so greatly that a new home—the first granite building in Los Angeles—was erected at the corner of First and Broadway—then Fort Street—a long, dusty, country road shaded by pepper trees.

Curiously enough, that location had always been a center of news and gossip. There was a large bubbling spring where the Mexican women by the pueblo gathered to do their marketing.

The Times Building was usually known in the town as the "Fort" or the "Castle." There were unique features in the building. The business office counter was made of inland woods from historic trees, famous ships and buildings of old traditions. Under the printing press were stones of glorious memory. One that I recall came from the Appian Way of the Romans. Any one of half a dozen different departments of The Times of that day would fill that whole building to overflowing. As it was, the building was enlarged several times before being finally destroyed.

## THEN CAME CRASH

Everything with the little paper was booming; then came the real estate smash of 1888—which made the present depression look like Christmas morning.

Advertising faded out of the little sheet like dew on a hot sidewalk. It was a period that called for all that the staff had of fortitude. Col. Otis filled the vacant advertising space with news and struggled along.

With an almost canny intuition, he had gathered about him a remarkable staff.

A Harvard graduate, Charles F. Lummis, had walked across the continent—one of the first to do so. . . .

Pfaffinger as cashier of the little paper. Painfully conscientious, Frank often used to meet the pay rolls from his own savings. When I first came on The Times, as a little job reporter, I soon learned that old Frank was always good for a "touch." With his own money he was prodigally and recklessly generous; but ask him for 10 cents of The Times' money and you took your life in your hands. When with fear and trembling I presented an expense account for 40 cents, I always left the "case" convinced I was the last of the great criminals.

## CHANDLER CAME WEST

On a New England university campus, a group of Yankee college boys were "daring" each other. One of them dared a husky young giant from New Hampshire to jump in an ice pond. Harry Chandler took the dare. A little later he came to California in an effort to rescue his shattered health. For a while he herded horses in the San Fernando Valley, peddling fruit on the side. Finally he bought a taste of The Times—buying papers from the office; peddling them before breakfast to his customers. Later he became circulation manager and then business manager of the paper—Col. Otis's son-in-law, his mainstay and his successor.

Three of Mr. Chandler's sons are now on the staff of The Times in various executive capacities; but they know exactly how the world feels at 4 a.m. They have all been through the morning routine for The Times.

They also know how it is to be smeared with printers' ink until they looked as though they were wearing gas masks—developing their muscular lunging type around—doing the dirty work.

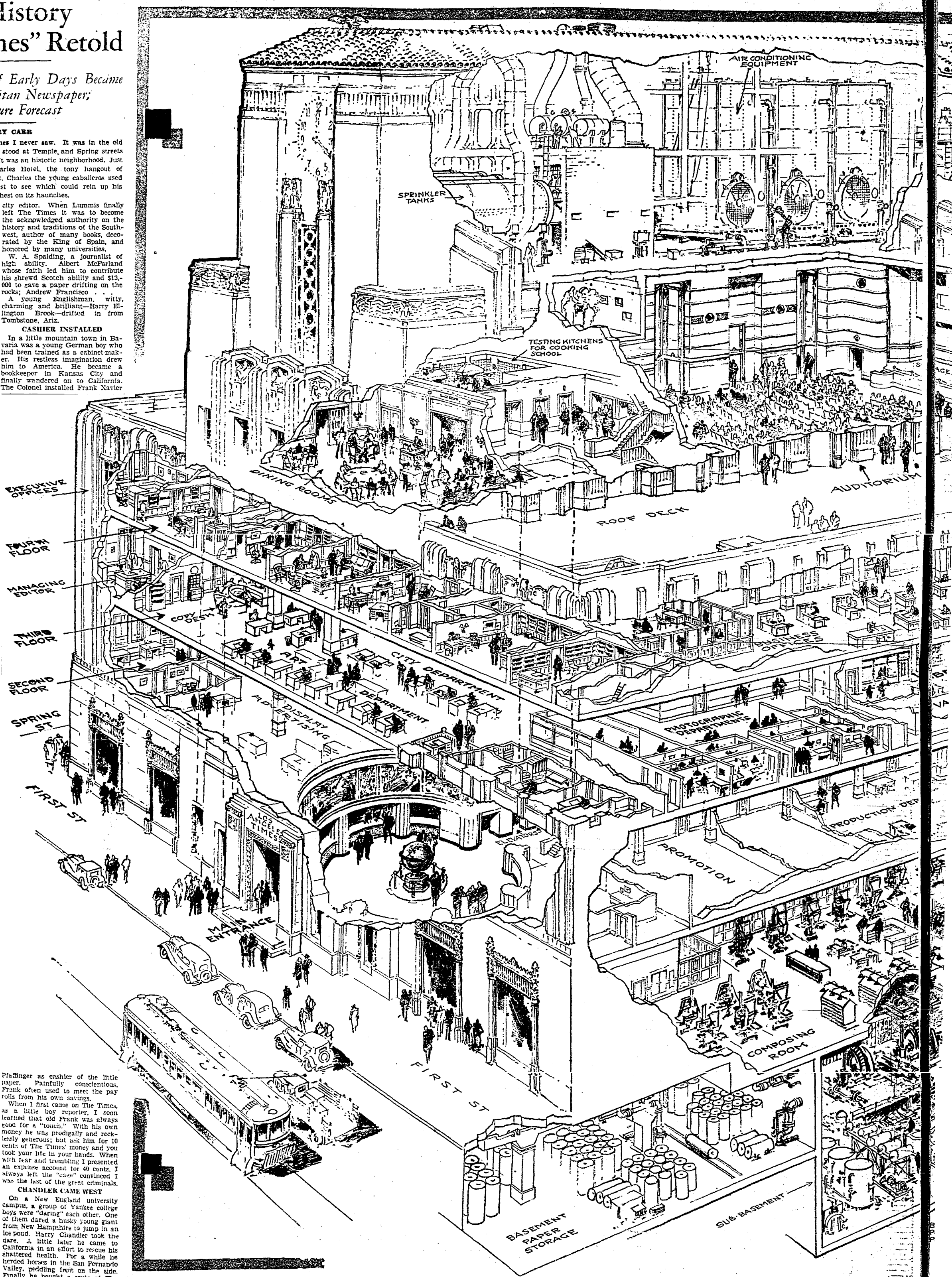
Struggling through the real estate smash, the little paper was knocked to its knees again by other disasters. And yet there were triumphs, too. In 1888 the attention of the entire world was focused on The Times by

one of the greatest newspaper scoops of all time. An ex-preacher named Murchison in Pomona—suspecting that the English government was trying to elect Grover Cleveland for a second term—wrote to Lord

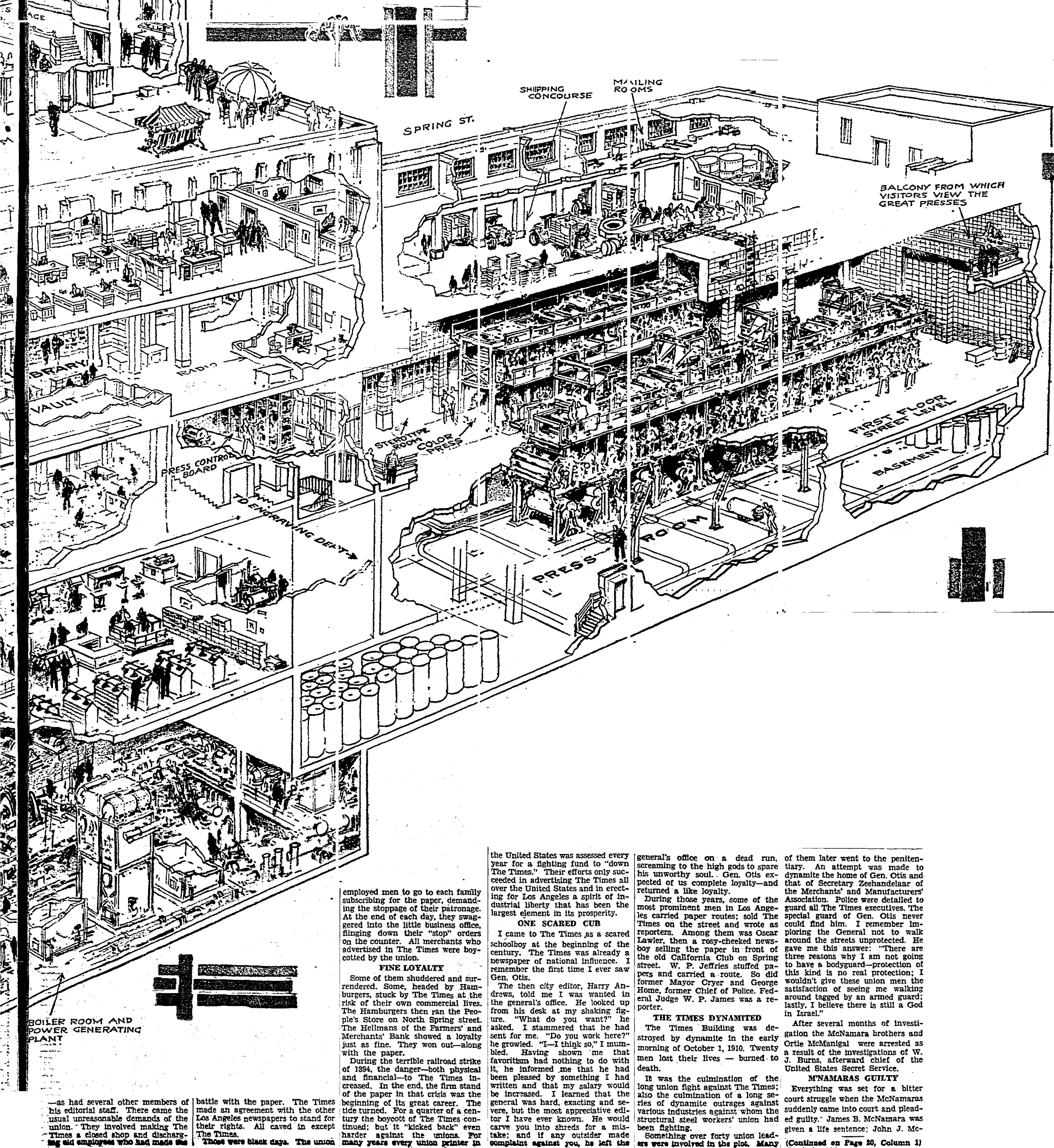
Sackville-West, the British Minister at Washington, representing himself as an Englishman and asking His Lordship's advice how to vote. The publication of Lord Sackville-West's reply in this obscure little country-

town newspaper—with a circulation of 6713—resulted in the recall of the minister and the defeat of Grover Cleveland.

The greatest crisis came in 1890. Col. Otis had been a union printer



THIS remarkable visualization of the most modern newspaper plant in America was drawn for this Progress Number by Charles H. Owens, Times staff artist. It affords a picture of the manifold activities in a great metropolitan newspaper building, just as clearly as if its walls were made of glass. The main lobby, auditorium, roof decks and visitors' galleries are designed for the convenience of the public. Business offices occupy the first, second and fourth floors. For the rapid production of a daily paper a "straight line" process will take copy and art from the editorial department on the third floor to the composing room on the first. Thence, to the stereotype room and on to the huge battery of presses. Conveyors will carry the finished product to the mailing room on the second floor. Here the newspapers will be dropped through chutes to trucks in the concourse below.



employed men to go to each family subscribing for the paper, demanding the stoppage of their patronage. At the end of each day, they swaggered into the little business office, flinging down their "stop" orders on the counter. All merchants who advertised in The Times were boycotted by the union.

#### FINE LOYALTY

Some of them shuddered and surrendered. Some, headed by Hamburgers, stuck by The Times at the risk of their own commercial lives. The Hamburgers then ran the People's Store on North Spring street. The Hellmans of the Farmers' and Merchants' Bank showed a loyalty just as fine. They won out—along with the paper.

During the terrible railroad strike of 1894, the danger—both physical and financial—to The Times increased. In the end, the firm stand of the paper in that crisis was the beginning of its great career. The tide turned. For a quarter of a century the boycott of The Times continued; but it "kicked back" even harder against the unions. For many years every union printer in

the United States was assessed every year for a fighting fund to "down The Times." Their efforts only succeeded in advertising The Times all over the United States and in creating for Los Angeles a spirit of industrial liberty that has been the largest element in its prosperity.

#### ONE SCARED CUB

I came to The Times as a scared schoolboy at the beginning of the century. The Times was already a newspaper of national influence. I remember the first time I ever saw Gen. Otis.

The then city editor, Harry Andrews, told me I was wanted in the general's office. He looked up from his desk at my shaking figure. "What do you want?" he asked. I stammered that he had sent for me. "Do you work here?" he growled. "I—I think so," I mumbled. Having shown me that favoritism had nothing to do with it, he informed me that he had been pleased by something I had written and that my salary would be increased. I learned that the general was hard, exacting and severe, but the most appreciative editor I have ever known. He would carve you into shreds for a mistake; and if any outsider made complaint against you, he left the

general's office on a dead run, screaming to the high gods to spare his unworthy soul. Gen. Otis expected of us complete loyalty—and returned a like loyalty.

During those years, some of the most prominent men in Los Angeles carried paper routes; sold The Times on the street and wrote as reporters. Among them was Oscar Lawler, then a rosy-cheeked newsboy selling the paper in front of the old California Club on Spring street. W. P. Jeffries stuffed papers and carried a route. So did former Mayor Cryer and George Home, former Chief of Police. Federal Judge W. P. James was a reporter.

#### THE TIMES DYNAMITED

The Times Building was destroyed by dynamite in the early morning of October 1, 1910. Twenty men lost their lives—burned to death.

It was the culmination of the long union fight against The Times; also the culmination of a long series of dynamite outrages against various industries against whom the structural steel workers' union had been fighting.

Something over forty union leaders were involved in the plot. Many

of them later went to the penitentiary. An attempt was made to dynamite the home of Gen. Otis and that of Secretary Zeehandelaar of the Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association. Police were detailed to guard all The Times executives. The special guard of Gen. Otis never could find him. I remember imploring the General not to walk around the streets unprotected. He gave me this answer: "There are three reasons why I am not going to have a bodyguard—protection of this kind is no real protection; I wouldn't give these union men the satisfaction of seeing me walking around tagged by an armed guard; lastly, I believe there is still a God in Israel."

After several months of investigation the McNamara brothers and Ortle McNamara were arrested as a result of the investigations of W. J. Burns, afterward chief of the United States Secret Service.

#### MCNAMARAS GUILTY

Everything was set for a bitter court struggle when the McNamaras suddenly came into court and pleaded guilty. James B. McNamara was given a life sentence; John J. Mc-

(Continued on Page 20, Column 1)

—as had several other members of his editorial staff. There came the usual unreasonable demands of the union. They involved making The Times a closed shop and discharging old employees who had made the

battle with the paper. The Times made an agreement with the other Los Angeles newspapers to stand for their rights. All caved in except The Times. Those were black days. The union



# Story of "The Times"

## Is One of Progress

*New Building Replaced That Destroyed by Dynamiters; Paper Grew Pace by Pace With City*

(Continued from Thirteenth Page)  
Namara, his brother, got fifteen years—since served.

After the explosion The Times had to find a new home. On Spring street, between Fifth and Sixth, there was a branch office where advertisements were taken. Into this moved the editorial and business office force. We were packed in like sardines; the printers had a temporary composing room way down on College street. The disaster to The Times had not been entirely unexpected. There had been many threats of violence so The Times had maintained a substitute plant, ready for just such an emergency. All the copy intended for publication had to be sent three or four weary miles by motorcycle messengers. To correct a mistake in proof meant an expedition.

The Times had a small job printing establishment on Broadway between First and Second; finally we moved into the second floor of that building and again set up house-keeping. It was better, but still trying and expensive.

### REPLICA OF CASTLE

Work began on the second Times Building almost before the ashes were cold in the dynamited building. This new home was a replica of a famous ducal castle in Italy. At the time, it seemed to be a colossal structure, dynamite and earthquake proof, with an editorial room that looked big enough to maneuver a regiment of cavalry. But the growth of the newspaper soon filled it.

During these years The Times was a kindergarten for many writers who have since become famous.

One day John Daggett, then a boy not long out of Stanford, came into the editorial office escorting a young fellow with very rosy cheeks and wearing the cap of a gatekeeper of the Pacific Electric Railroad. Harry E. Andrews was then managing editor. He had the eerie second sight that sometimes distinguishes great newspapermen.

### "VAN DINE" HIRED

He looked at this young gatekeeper for a minute; then abruptly offered him the position of literary editor of the paper. The young gatekeeper was Willard Huntington Wright—now famous as "S. S. Van Dine," the world's most successful writer of mystery stories. He had the ruthlessness of the very young—being still in his teens—but no newspaper, before or since, has ever published a more brilliant literary page.

Adache Kinoshuke, the Japanese author, was also literary editor of The Times for a while. So was Gordon Kay Young, author of many best sellers.

Mr. Andrews picked a young Canadian girl as dramatic editor from the same kind of "hunch." She was Constance Lindsay Skinner, since a

poet of world celebrity and editor of the Yale University historical series.

Frederick Bechdolt, famous writer of western books, was a police reporter. H. H. Dunn, author of many brilliant books on Mexico and the West, was a proof reader.

### TIMES GRADUATES

Julian Johnson, now a well-known executive in the movies, was dramatic editor after Miss Skinner went to New York.

Emily Lindsay Squire, an assistant in the society department, has become a celebrated writer of books.

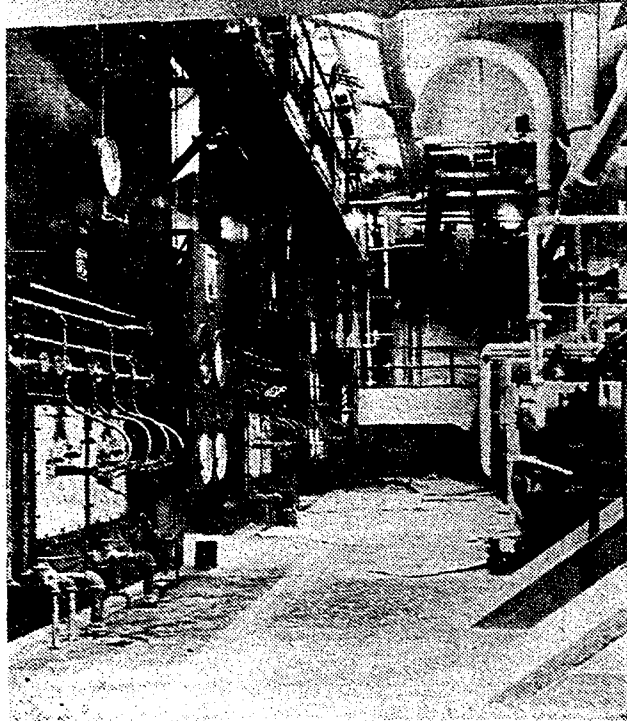
The author of "Don Q." Johnston McCulley, which marked the start of the screen fame of Douglas Fairbanks, was an assistant in the dramatic department.

Frederick O'Brien, author of "White Shadows of the South Seas," had a minor reporting job.

Richard Barry, war correspondent, author and dramatist, was a dramatic critic.

Austin Martin, vice-president of the Security-First National Bank, was City Hall reporter.

All through the movies, in the capitals of Europe and the Orient, I found men in important journalistic positions who had graduated from The Times.



BOILER ROOM IN NEW TIMES BUILDING

Thirty-five feet below level of Spring street.